MORTON COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

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Morton County Chairman Cody Schulz Responds to US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) Decision to Evict Protesters

Mandan, ND - Morton County Commission Chairman Cody Schulz responded today to the US Army Corp of Engineers announcement that they will close to public use and access property they manage north of the Cannonball River. "I am thankful that the Corps has realized the threat that law enforcement personnel and Morton County residents are facing from the violent faction within the protest camp. While the acknowledgement is long overdue, it is the first step toward a peaceful resolution to the situation" said Schulz. "However, this decision means nothing unless the federal government follows up by sending federal law enforcement personnel to enforce the decision."

During the past three months, County and State leaders have been requesting federal law enforcement resources to deal with issues that are clearly the federal government's responsibility, but those requests have been largely ignored. "It's now time for the federal government to live up to its obligations" said Schulz.

Schulz also urged the Obama administration to make a final decision on granting or denying the easement required for the Dakota Access Pipeline to complete boring under Lake Oahe. County and State law enforcement officials continue to operate in an environment that requires balancing the tasks of protecting citizens' rights to protest peacefully and stopping the illegal and sometimes violent actions of a faction of the protesters. "I have stated before that further delay puts peoples' safety, health and life on the line. While the violent faction within the protest group is a minority, it is a real threat to law enforcement. The hostile actions law enforcement have endured include being shot at, having molotov cocktails, rocks, sticks, bottles, cans, and feces thrown at them, having buffalo stampeded at them, being spit on, and being verbally assaulted." Schulz also expressed a concern for those in the protest camps staying safe in winter conditions. "North Dakota winters are hard, and further delay by the federal government in clearing the camp and deciding on the easement also prolongs people living in tents and teepees in harsh conditions. Our goal is to keep everyone safe, including protesters, and the federal government just continues to make that difficult."